

SETTLING THE WESTERN FRONTIER REVIEW GUIDES



Vocabulary terms and identifications on the American Frontier

“Exodusters”

“Exodusters” were African-Americans who chose to leave the South in the 1860s and 1870s in order to try and make a living in the West, on the Great Plains, as farmers.

They took their name from the Book of Exodus in the Bible, during which the Israelites escaped slavery, crossed the Red Sea when Moses put down his staff, and subsequently lived in the desert, where the Lord provided.

For most “Exodusters,” life was difficult on the Great Plains. The land in Kansas and Nebraska was fertile, however, the work was difficult and the weather was unreliable.

All Colored People
THAT WANT TO

GO TO KANSAS,

On September 5th, 1877,

Can do so for \$5.00

IMMIGRATION.

WHEREAS, We, the colored people of Lexington, Ky., knowing that there is an abundance of choice lands now belonging to the Government, have assembled ourselves together for the purpose of locating on said lands. Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we do now organize ourselves into a Colony, as follows:— Any person wishing to become a member of this Colony can do so by paying the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), and this money is to be paid by the first of September, 1877, in instalments of twenty-five cents at a time, or otherwise as may be desired.

RESOLVED, That this Colony has agreed to consolidate itself with the Nicodemus Towns, Solomon Valley, Graham County, Kansas, and can only do so by entering the vacant lands now in their midst, which costs \$5.00.

RESOLVED, That this Colony shall consist of seven officers—President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three Trustees. President—M. M. Bell; Vice-President—Isaac Talbott; Secretary—W. J. Niles; Treasurer—Daniel Clarke; Trustees—Jerry Lee, William Jones, and Abner Webster.

RESOLVED, That this Colony shall have from one to two hundred militia, more or less, as the case may require, to keep peace and order, and any member failing to pay in his dues, as aforesaid, or failing to comply with the above rules in any particular, will not be recognized or protected by the Colony.

The Buffalo Soldiers

Buffalo Soldiers were African-Americans who volunteered to serve in the 9th and 10th Cavalry divisions in the United States Army. After the Civil War, during which hundreds of thousands of African-Americans had volunteered to serve, many decided to stay on in the service.

Serving in the military was a good job compared to the work available in the South: agricultural labor or sharecropping.

The only major concern, of course, was the risk to one's life. Buffalo soldiers were tasked with protecting American settlers as they crossed the Great Plains, clearing and maintaining railroads and telegraph lines, and keeping Native Americans confined to reservations. Fighting Native Americans on behalf of a nation which did not offer them full citizenship or equality often placed black soldiers in an uncomfortable bind.



The Homestead Act of 1862

The Homestead Act was passed in 1862; however, it was not fully taken advantage of until after the completion of the Civil War.


In order to encourage Americans and immigrants to move into the Great Plains region, land was sold at low, low prices. A person could receive 160 acres of land for a simple \$10 filing fee. The only stipulation was the settlers were required to "improve the land."

In practice, this just meant that they had to live on the property they had acquired. By farming, ranching, or simply putting up a house, barn or fences, they could claim ownership of a large plot without paying for it.

PRODUCTS WILL PAY FOR LAND AND IMPROVEMENTS!

MILLIONS OF ACRES

View on the Big Blue, between Camden and Crete, representing Valley and Rolling Prairie Land in Nebraska.



IOWA AND NEBRASKA LANDS

FOR SALE ON 10 YEARS CREDIT
BY THE

Burlington & Missouri River R.R. Co.

AT 6 PER CT. INTEREST AND LOW PRICES.
Only One-Seventh of Principal Due Annually, beginning Four Years after purchase.
20 PER CENT. DEDUCTED FROM 10 YEARS PRICE, FOR CASH.

LAND EXPLORING TICKETS SOLD
and Cost allowed in First Interest paid, on Land bought in 30 days from date of ticket.
Thus our Land Buyers GET A FREE PASS in the State where the Land bought is located.
These TERMS are BETTER at \$5, than to pre-empt United States Land at \$2.50 per Acre.
EXTRAORDINARY INDUCEMENTS on FREIGHT and PASSAGE are AFFORDED TO PURCHASERS and THEIR FAMILIES.

Address **GEO. S. HARRIS, LAND COMMISSIONER,**
or **T. H. LEAVITT, Ass't Land Comm'r,** Burlington, Iowa.

Or apply to

FREE ROOMS for buyers to board themselves are provided at Burlington and Lincoln.

CIRCULARS are supplied GRATIS for distribution in ORGANIZING COLONIES and to induce individuals to emigrate WEST.

A SECTIONAL MAP, showing exact location of our IOWA LANDS is sold for 30 Cents, and of NEBRASKA LANDS for 30 Cents.

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING PRINTING HOUSE, BUFFALO, N. Y.

Trails to the West

There were a variety of trails which led settlers into the West. Lewis and Clark had been the original trailblazers moving to the West; however, many others followed. A partial list of the trails headed west is listed below:

The Spanish Trail

The Santa Fe Trail

The Oregon Trail

The Mormon Trail

The California Trail



Cattle Trails

Don't confuse trail leading West with these cattle trails, which were used by cowboys and ranchers to move their herds to market:

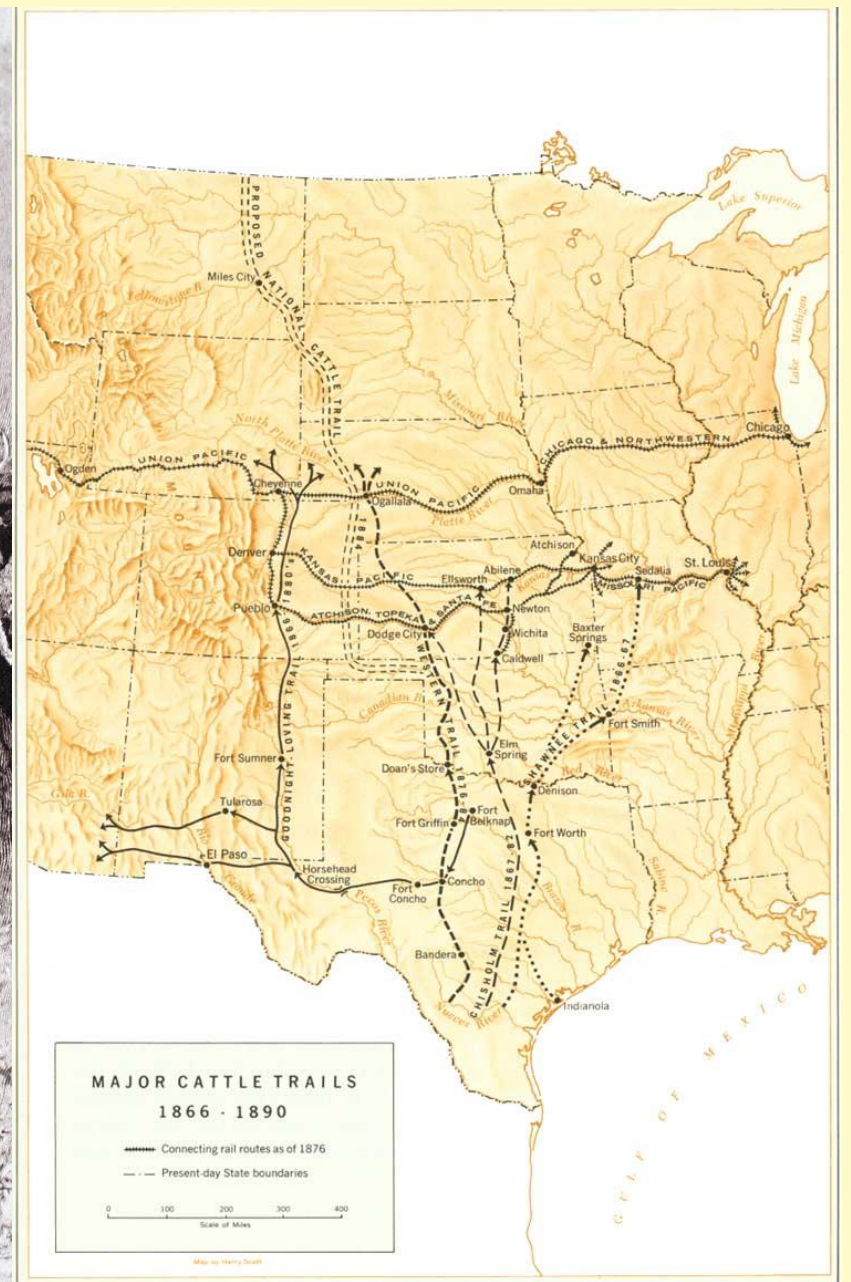
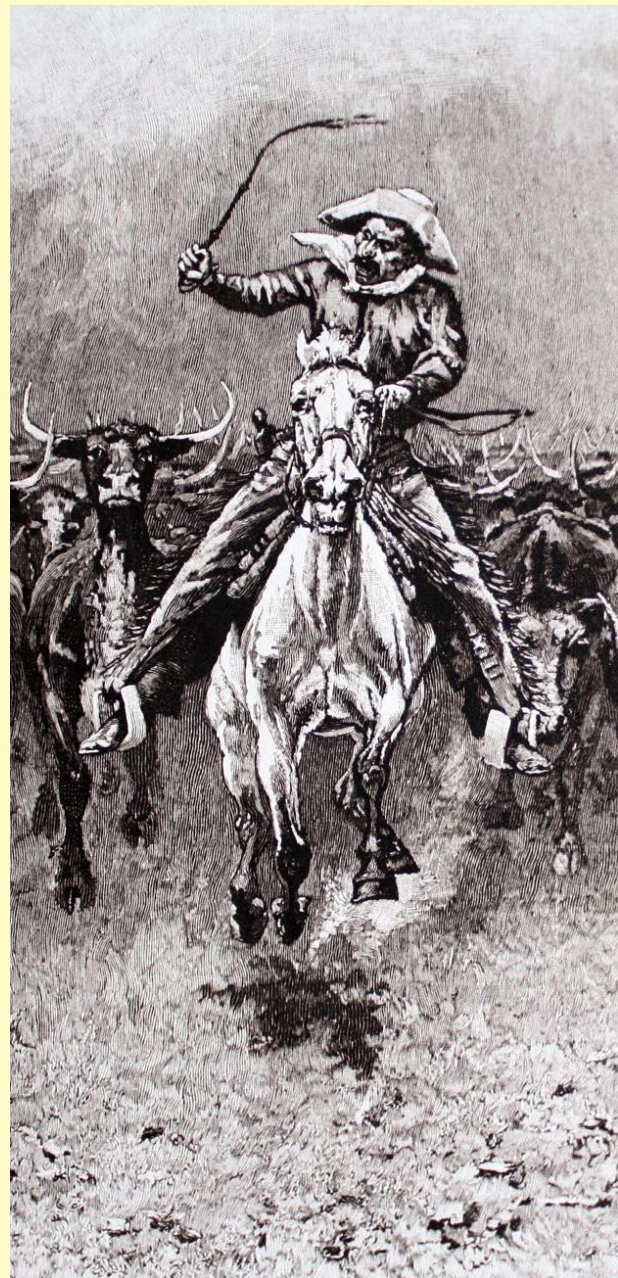
The Great Western Trail

The Chisholm Trail

The Shawnee Trail

The Baxter Springs Trail

The Goodnight-Loving Trail



Mining Communities in the Far West

Mining was a major factor in the settling of the American West. Gold strikes in California, at Pikes Peak, and at the Comstock Lode in Nevada brought many thousands of Americans West – along with others from as far away as Mexico, China, or Japan.

Major cities in the West today – Denver, CO; Boise, ID; and many others in the southwest were established by miners trying to strike it rich prospecting for gold, silver, and copper.



Cattle Ranchers and the Railroads

The relationship between cattle ranchers and the railroads was mutually beneficial. Cattle ranchers had thousands of steer, but very few customers in the Southwest.

By connecting to the railroads, cattle ranchers were able to move their product to eastern markets, where beef consumption soon shot up.

Cattlemen could sell their herds to the railroads, who would then ship the animals to slaughterhouses in the East, which quickly distributed beef to markets. Money was made by people throughout the process.



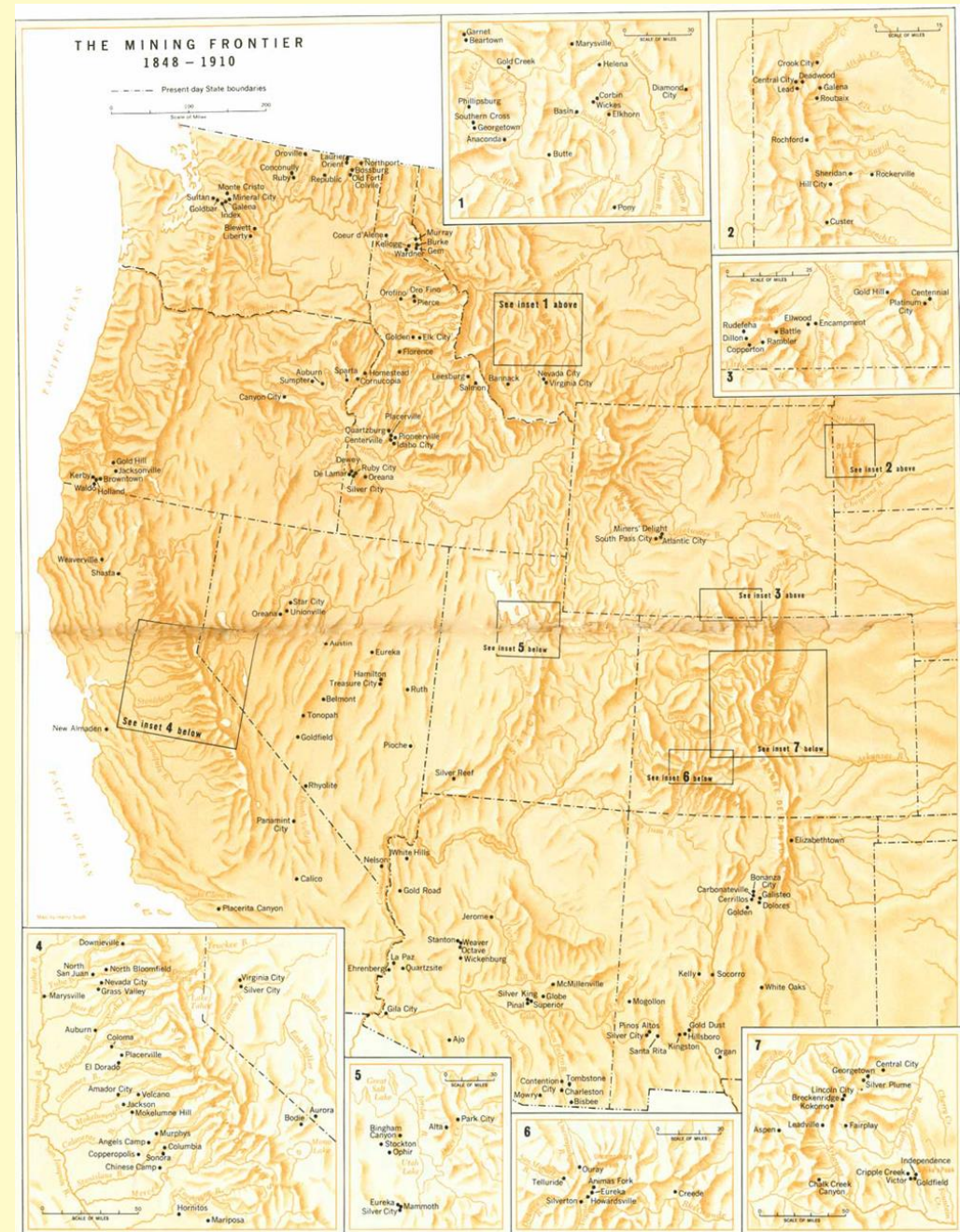
The Great Plains States...

The last states that entered into the Union were states on the Great Plains, in the Rocky Mountains, and in the Great Basin region of the United States.

In general the settlement of the United States progressed from east to west, right up until the Mississippi River flood plain was settled.

In the 1840s and 1850s, California and the Oregon Country were settled – the Pacific coastline.

The last part of the United States settled was the area in between: the Great Plains, the Rockies, and the Great Basin.

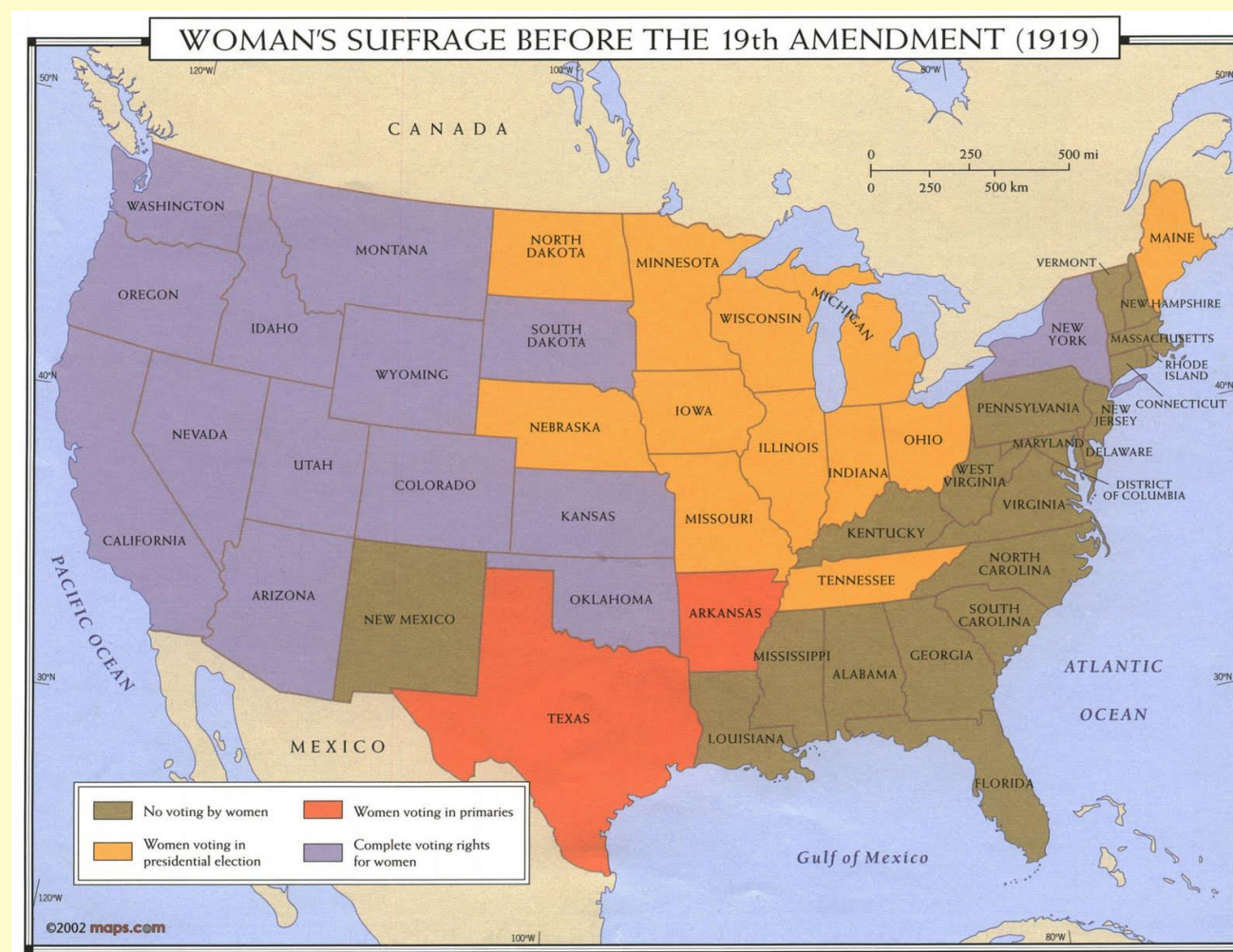


Woman's Suffrage in the American West

Look at the map to the right. All of the states which are shaded in with purple are places where women had complete voting rights before the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1919.

Other than New York – the state where the Seneca Fall Convention was held and from which Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton both hailed – all of the other states granting suffrage rights to women were in the West!

Why? Historians suggest that the shortage of labor in the West caused men to better appreciate their partners – and to admire the role played by independent women.



Policies Towards Native Americans

The United States of America established a variety of policies after the Civil War in order to subdue Native Americans and encourage assimilation into American culture:

- Native American tribes were removed from their homelands and relocated to reservations in the American West.
- The buffalo was slaughtered practically to the point of extinction in order to prevent Native Americans from leading nomadic lifestyles.
- Dependency on government provided resources was encouraged.

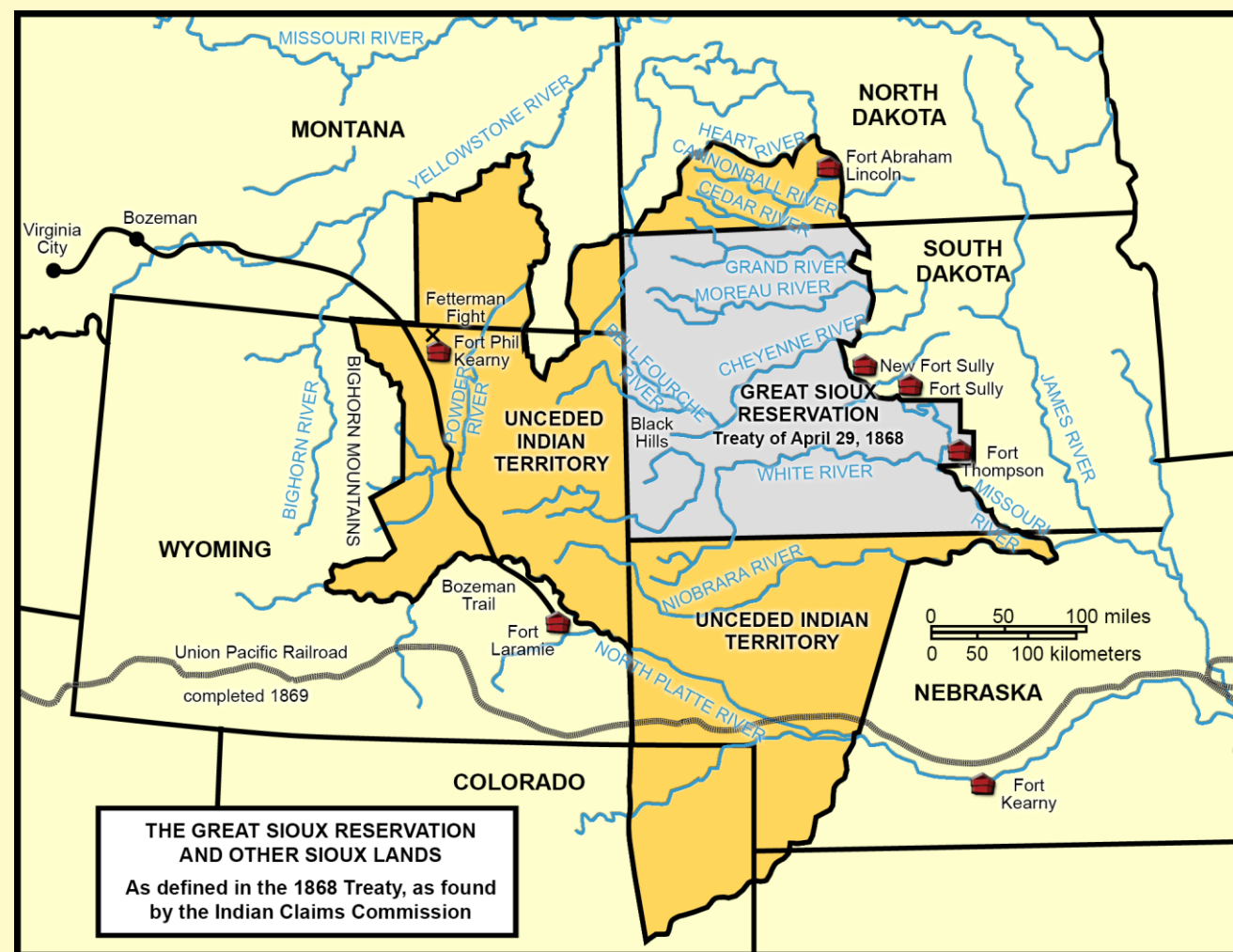


The Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868

The Fort Laramie treaties were two representative agreements between the United States and a confederation of tribes in the American West.

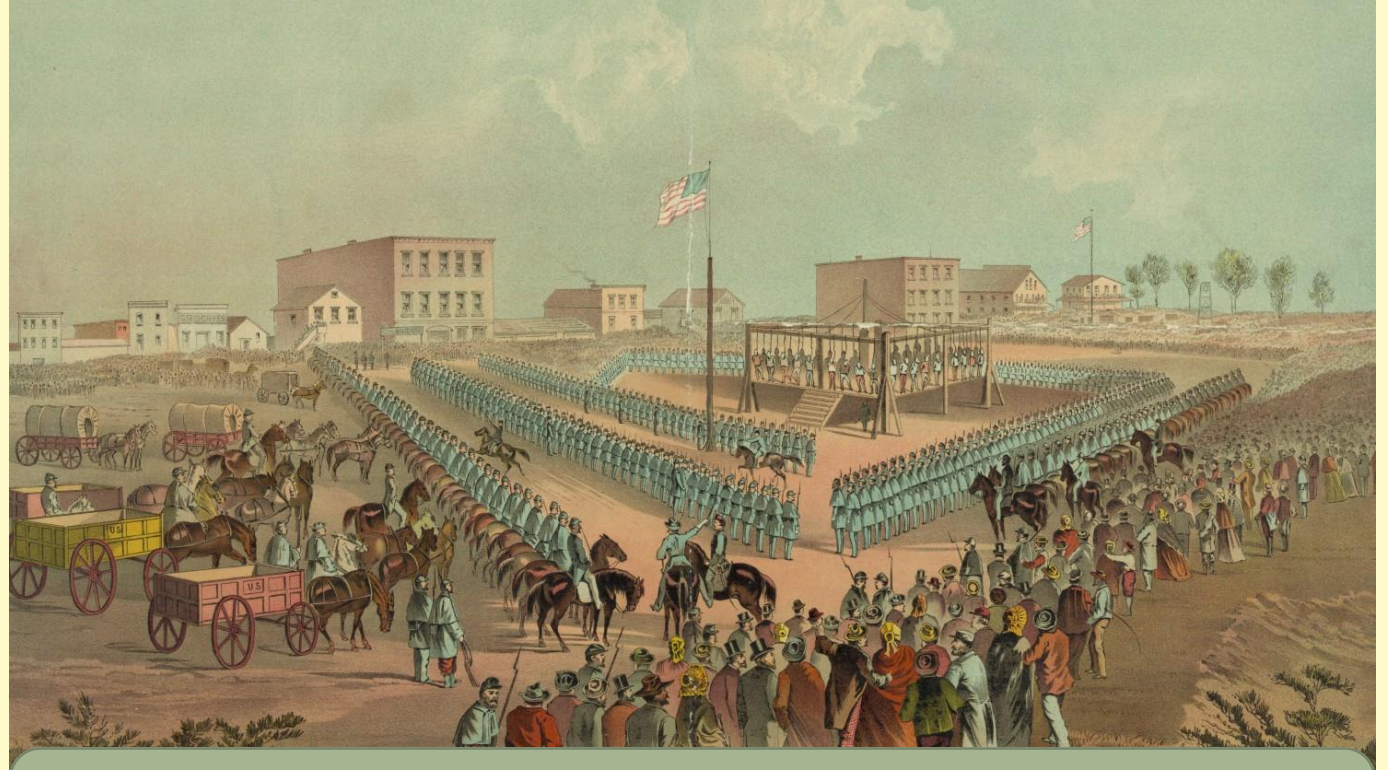
The basic premise was this: if Native American tribes would allow safe passage of settlers through their territories – as they made their way to the Pacific Northwest, California, or mining communities elsewhere – then they would be allowed to live on and possess the land for “as long as the grass shall grow.”

Unfortunately, Americans simply did not live up to their end of the bargain, allowing settlers to move into Indian territories, and eventually dispossessing them of most of their land.



The Mankato Executions of 1862

The Dakota War of 1862 is a little known conflict which occurred in Minnesota during the Civil War. The origins of the dispute were tied to a series of violations of a treaty signed between the US government and the Dakota Sioux. Frequently delays in the payment of annuities and restrictions on trade led to rising tension, and when a hunting party including several Dakota warriors murdered a group of five settlers, war erupted. Since Americans were well occupied by the Civil War at the time, brutal methods were used to put down the insurrection. Abraham Lincoln would sign the order to execute 39 leaders of the rebellion on Christmas Day, 1862. Although one of the condemned was granted a reprieve, the execution of 38 men on December 26th, 1862 was still the largest execution carried out by the United States government in history.



The Mankato Executions, carried out in 1862, were punishment for the uprising in Minnesota known as the Dakota War of 1862.

Movement of American Soldiers, 1876 - 1877

In 1877, the Reconstruction of the American South came to an end when President Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to the Compromise of 1876.

The fact that Union soldiers were now entirely removed from administering martial law in the South, coupled with the devastating defeat of Custer's Seventh Cavalry at Little Big Horn, resulted in the movement of American soldier from the South to the West.

The new goal of American soldiers on the Frontier was to place Native American Indian tribes onto the reservations. They would be extremely effective.



The Battle of Little Bighorn – June 28th, 1876



News of Custer's defeat at Little Bighorn enraged patriotic Americans during their Centennial Year, 1876

Also known as Custer's Last Stand, this "battle" took place in late June of 1876. Custer and the 7th Cavalry Unit had been tasked with capturing members of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes, and returning them to their respective reservations.

Custer recklessly attacked the encampment at Little Bighorn, which was led by two Native American chiefs: Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. He did not realize the size of the Native American contingent. Over 10,000 Native Americans and close to 20,000 horses were in the group. Custer led around 300 men into the assault, and which ended in death and devastation for them all. The entire 7th Cavalry was wiped out.

In the short term, this was a major Native American victory; however, when news reached the east that the 7th Cavalry had been destroyed – Americans reacted by redoubling their efforts to confine Native Americans to the reservations. Within two years, virtually every Native American tribe had been displaced in this manner.

The Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890

The Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 is generally considered the final battle of the so-called "Plains Wars." It's not really a battle.

When an Indian police officer attempted to arrest Sitting Bull during a ritual known as the "Ghost Dance," Sitting Bull resisted. He ended up being shot and killed, which provoked anger within the Native American reservation.

When hostilities spilled over into violence, the US Army brought in automatic weapons, which they used to mow down approximately 190 members of the Sioux tribe.

Spotted Elk, member of the Sioux Tribe, lies in the snow after having been killed at Wounded Knee in 1890. US Soldiers are in the background.



"I know the men did not aim deliberately and they were greatly excited. I don't believe they saw their sights. They fired rapidly but it seemed to me only a few seconds till there was not a living thing before us; warriors, squaws, children, ponies, and dogs ... went down before that unaimed fire." – Captain Edward Godfrey, 7th Cavalry.

The Transcontinental Railroad

The Transcontinental Railroad was completed in May of 1869, after approximately seven years of construction. Two companies, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Central Pacific Railroad, worked on what was then considered a wonder of the world. Starting in Omaha, ex-Confederates, former slaves, Irish Immigrants and others cooperated to lay track across the Great Plains. Chinese contract laborers did much of the work from the Central Pacific Railroad, from Sacramento to Promontory Point, UT. Leland Stanford, a railroad baron from the West, drove in the final “golden spike” to complete the railroad at Promontory Point, UT.



The Telegraph

Samuel F.B. Morse “discovered” the telegraph more than he invented it. While he was training to be a painter in Paris, France, he encountered the device as it had been created by a French innovator.

Morse brought the contraption back to the United States in the 1840s, where it quickly changed the nature of communication in the US. As the railroads expanded West, the telegraph lines moved along in parallel lines.

One of the tasks of Buffalo Soldiers on the Great Plains was to maintain these lines.



President Ulysses S. Grant

Ulysses S. Grant was the President of the United States from 1869 – 1877.

Major events during Grant's Presidency included:

The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

The occupation of the American South during Reconstruction.

Enforcement of the Ku Klux Klan Act.

Support for the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.

Additionally, there was a major scandal involving the bribery of government officials and embezzlement on the part of railroad companies, called the Credit-Mobilier Scandal.

Southern historians, who hated Grant for his hard line policies on Reconstruction, disparaged his reputation in a series of biographies.



The Comstock Lode

Henry Comstock staked a claim to a piece of land in Western Nevada in 1858, and he was one of the few individuals who managed to strike it rich in the West. But he didn't do nearly as well as he might have done.

Henry Comstock discovered gold and silver on his claim, but then sold it for around \$13,000. This was a small fortune at the time; however, Comstock had underestimated the value of his claim.

The company which bought his claim would eventually extract close to \$300 Million of gold and silver! Virginia City, Nevada was founded on the site.



Bob Marley's "Buffalo Soldier"

Bob Marley's song "Buffalo Soldier" is an homage to the plight of the African-American soldier.

In the song, he reflects on the tasks which Buffalo Soldiers were commanded to carry out. Although they were not treated as equal citizens in the United States at the time, many African-Americans served their country courageously with the hopes that they could expect a better future for themselves and their posterity.

The most difficult part for many Buffalo Soldiers was fighting to place Native Americans onto reservations. One group of poorly treated Americans was being used in order to dispossess another of their land and their liberty.

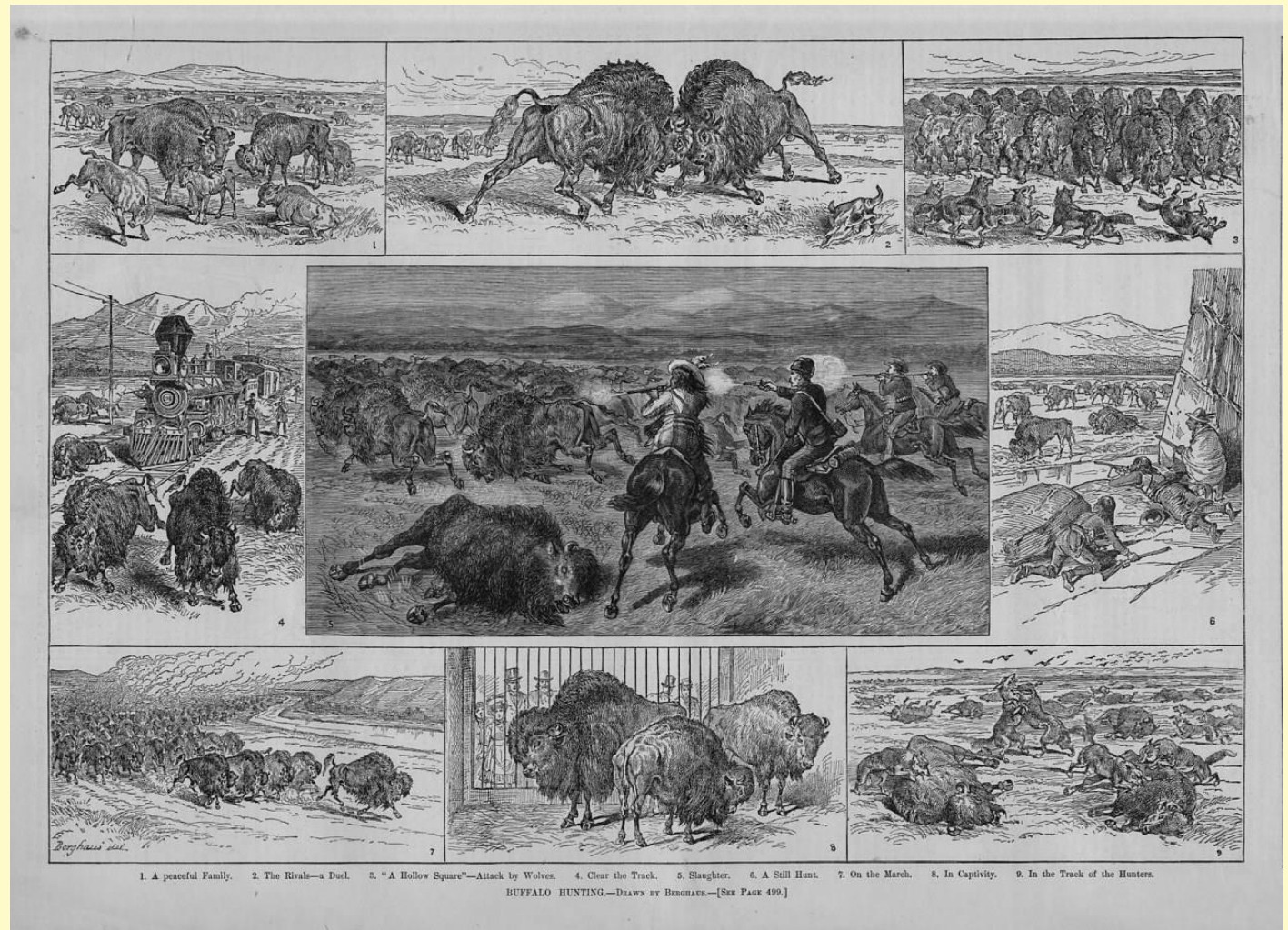


The Extermination of the Buffalo

It was the policy of the United States government to kill the herds of buffalo which once roamed the Great Plains in the United States.

Since Native Americans wandered the Great Plains nomadically – often relying on the buffalo for the resources they needed to survive – the government targeted the herds of buffalo in order to force Native Americans to lead a more sedentary lifestyle.

Millions of buffalo were slaughtered by Americans who were hired specifically for the task. Some were shot from galleries on the trains. Today, the only herd of wild buffalo on the continent are in and around Yellowstone National Park.



The National Park Service

The National Park Service was established during the late 19th Century, with Yellowstone National Park opening for the first time in 1876. Surprisingly, the idea for the National Park System was not come up with by nature lovers and tree-huggers. Instead, it was brought forth by the railroad companies.

Recognizing that the immense natural beauty of areas like Yellowstone, Yosemite, or the Grand Canyon would be crowd pleasers, the railroad companies hoped to encourage customers by making these places into tourist destinations.



The Retreat of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce.

When the Nez Perce tribe was told that they would be required to move from their ancient homelands in the Wallawa Valley to a reservation in Lapway, Idaho, they rebelled.

Attempting to escape to Canada, the Nez Perce tribe was pursued by the US Army, which tracked them to within 30 miles of the border. Bloodshed and violence prevailed for weeks, until Chief Joseph's famous surrender, punctuated by the "I will fight no more forever" speech of 1877.



Wovoka and the “Ghost Dance” Movement.

The prophet Wovoka – also known as Jack Wilson – orchestrated the “Ghost Dance” movement during the late 1890s.

Followers of the movement believed that successful execution of the dance would make their flannel shirts bulletproof – and provoke a massive landslide which would sweep away white settlements. The buffalo would return, and Native Americans traditional lifestyles would be restored.



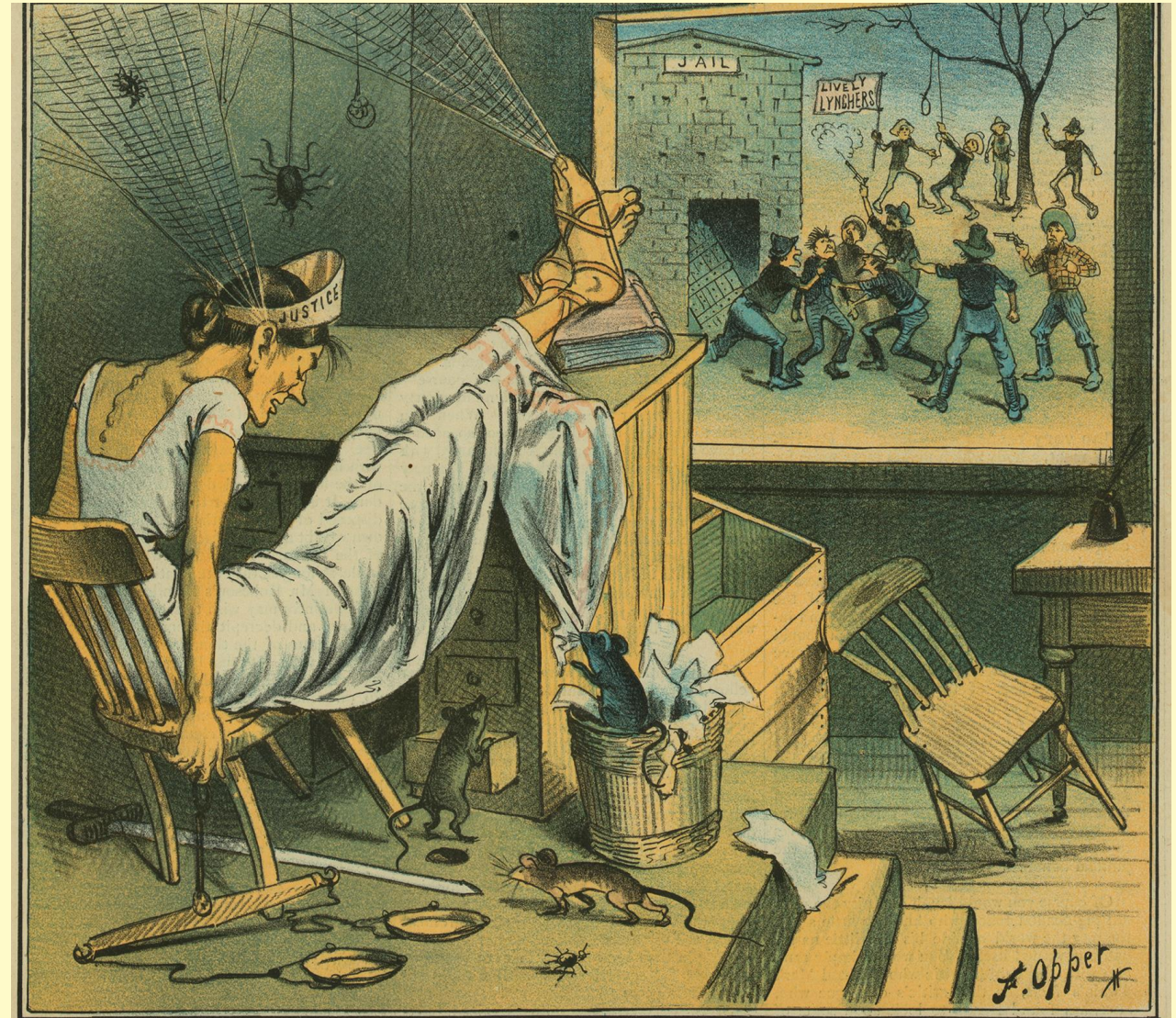
Vigilante Justice

In the American West, vigilante justice was often the law of the land. When Americans moved to the West, they found that there were very few government institutions in place.

There were no police in most parts of the West; sheriffs operated in conflict with outlaws.

The US Army maintained some forts in the West, but most settlements were not in close proximity to law enforcement.

Vigilante justice was swift, but it was also arbitrary and mistaken at times. Many innocent men were punished – even murdered – for crimes they did not commit. Vigilantes were similar to lynch mobs which target African-Americans in the South.



JUSTICE OUT OF A JOB.
EVERY MAN HIS OWN LYNCH-LAWYER IN THE SOUTH AND WEST.